

Remarks for Assembly Committee on Forestry
Regarding AB 643 – Education Grants for Logger Safety Training
By Representative Donald Friske
February 12, 2008

Thank you Committee members.

In an effort to increase the sustainability of forest management and maintain Wisconsin's forest product market share, the State of Wisconsin created a scholarship program to assist loggers to become Master Loggers © in the 2005-07 biennial budget.

This bill expands the program eligibility for scholarships used by loggers to include both Master Logger © and logger safety training programs. The bill does not expand the funding available, as a portion of the funds were not utilized in the last fiscal year. Rather than allowing remaining funds to lapse, it would be appropriate to expand the grants to a substantially similar purpose: logger safety training and education.

The source of the funds used in the current scholarship and proposed to be used in this safety program is the Forestry Account.

Thank you again for your time today to discuss this bill.



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor
Matthew J. Frank, Secretary

101 S. Webster St.
Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921
Telephone 608-266-2621
FAX 608-267-3579
TTY Access via relay - 711

Assembly Bill 643

Assembly Committee on Forestry

Department of Natural Resources Testimony

Bob Mather, Director
Bureau of Forest Management
February 12, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Good morning. My name is Bob Mather and I am the Director for the Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Forest Management. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you to discuss AB 643.

The Department of Natural Resources supports the underlying intent of the bill and appreciates the author's expressed desire to address training needs and their associated costs for our logging contractors. The department is testifying for informational purposes only.

This bill would expand the scope of the existing Wisconsin Master Logger Certification (MLC ©) Scholarship grant program. It would add the cost of logger safety training as an eligible cost under the program and also make that cost-sharing available to all logging contractors seeking logger safety training, including those who are not certified Master Loggers.

When the existing MLC © scholarship program was passed in 2005 Wisconsin Act 25, the Department was in support. The intent behind the existing program was to promote the MLC © and the professionalism, verification of business practices, and connectivity to forest certification that went along with it. The Department continues to support this program and what it stands for. Quality logging professionals provide a very important link to the struggling forest products industry in Wisconsin. AB 643 appears to deviate from the original intent of the scholarship program by making the cost-sharing of training available to anyone.

The Department would request the Committee draft language to amend AB643 so that the 50% cost share for training only be available to those who have achieved MLC © status. Such an amendment would maintain the Master Logger focus in s. 26.39(7) Wis. Stats. and provide a tangible benefit for those wishing to maintain and bear the cost of MLC © status. The Department would propose that Master Logger training eligible for the 50% cost share include any classes needed for maintaining MLC © and also any additional logger safety training classes administered by the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA).

I appreciate the opportunity to express the Department's concerns with AB 643 in its present form and would be glad to answer any questions you might have.